

FONIO TOOLKIT

The most impactful **GRAiN**
of the future!



Four stories, one grain. Choose the focus that
suits your business

Climate

Culture

**Health &
nutrition**

Glutenfree

WHAT THE F#NIO?!

Getting started with fonio

Fonio is often referred to as the most impactful grain of the future. With this mini-toolkit, you – whether you're an entrepreneur, chef, product developer, retailer, influencer or similar – can discover the potential of fonio and how to incorporate it into your own business proposition. You can choose one of the four focus areas or combine different elements; these are discussed later in this toolkit.

In this toolkit, you can read more about what fonio is, the opportunities within the Dutch and European market, and how to prepare fonio from scratch and incorporate it into dishes. This toolkit offers practical inspiration for entrepreneurs looking to capitalise on innovative and future-proof food products.

WHAT IS FONIO?

A grain with 5,000 years of history

Fonio is not a new crop; in fact, it is very old. It is Africa's oldest cultivated grain, having been grown in the Sahel for 5,000 years.

Fonio is as small as a grain of sand and matures in 6 to 10 weeks on land where almost nothing else grows. It thrives in poor, sandy soil without fertilisers, pesticides or irrigation. Its deep roots stabilise the soil; the plant protects communities in the Sahel from desertification and food shortages. It is mainly grown by women.

In West Africa and the Sahel, fonio is a cultural crop, eaten at weddings and during Ramadan, and offered to guests of honour. At the same time, it is a nutritious grain: gluten-free and high in fibre. It contains relatively high levels of methionine and cysteine compared to many other grains. These are essential amino acids that contribute to normal protein synthesis and play an important role in maintaining healthy skin, hair and nails. Fonio also has a relatively low glycaemic index (compared with many refined grain products), which is good for blood sugar levels.

Since 2018, fonio has held a novel food authorisation in the EU. In the Netherlands, it is now available at Ekoplaza, Odin, Sligro and various other outlets under the brand names Smaakt, Your Organic Nature, Solange's Cuisine, Sabarot and De Nieuwe Band. Bakers such as Gerard & Suus, brewers such as Tale Beer, and snack makers such as Kari's Crackers are developing products using it.

THE FONIO MARKET

The Dutch and European market

The fonio market in Europe is still small, which is precisely why there is scope for SME entrepreneurs who can present a clear vision.

327 TONNES

Annual imports
(EU + EFTA + UK, 2025*)

84 TONNES

Dutch imports
(2025*)

* Source: CBI
market data

The Netherlands is one of Europe's leading importers of fonio and plays an important role in introducing the grain to the wider European market. In 2025, total imports into the EU, EFTA countries and the UK amounted to approximately 327 tonnes, of which around 84 tonnes were imported into the Netherlands. Although the market is still relatively small compared to established grains such as quinoa, its niche position creates opportunities for SMEs to differentiate through innovation, quality and clear market positioning.

Fonio is currently positioned as a premium grain. Its higher price reflects relatively small production volumes, labour-intensive processing and a supply chain with multiple intermediaries. For SMEs, this means that fonio is best positioned on quality, functionality, origin and added value, rather than on price alone.

Although fonio is traditionally grown on a smaller scale, it offers opportunities as a distinctive and valuable crop within the international market. The growing interest in sustainable and nutritious grains makes fonio increasingly attractive as an exclusive supergrain. By marketing fonio internationally, local farmers can benefit from new economic opportunities, greater appreciation for traditional cultivation and a stronger position within the food chain.

FONIO BASICS

Nutritional value & preparation

Fonio is a nutritious and naturally gluten-free grain that fits well into a variety of diets. It contains a range of nutrients and is also quick and easy to prepare, making it a versatile ingredient in the kitchen

Average nutritional value	per 100 g
Energy	1359 kJ 325 kcal
Fat	0,5 g
of which saturated fatty acids	0,2 g
Carbohydrates	76,8 g
of which sugars	0,6 g
Fibre	7,2 g
Protein	7,3 g
Salt	0,01 g

Fonio has a slightly nutty flavour, with a texture somewhere between couscous and quinoa. In West Africa, it is eaten as porridge, as a base for stews such as yassa and mafé, steamed like couscous, and brewed into beer. You can also use it in granola (delicious over salad or soup), for coating (gluten-free crunch), in a breakfast bowl or in a lentil salad for a complete, protein-rich meal.

Fonio could be placed on the gluten-free shelf, or alongside grains with similar uses, such as couscous and quinoa.

PREPARATION METHOD (serves 2): Bring 100 g of fonio and 260 ml of water (or stock) to a boil and simmer for 2–3 minutes. Turn off the heat, cover the pan and leave to stand for about 10 minutes. Fluff up with a fork.

FONIO WITH OKRA & BROAD BEANS – PEPPER BROTH

Recipe by **NADIA ZEROUALI**

INGREDIENTS for 4-6 people

2 onions	1 bag (400 g) of okra (frozen)
2 cloves of garlic	400 g organic fonio
1 tomato	A couscous pan or other large
1/2 bunch of parsley	pan + steamer (lined with baking
2 tbsp olive oil	paper)
2 tbsp ras el hanout	
1 tbsp freshly ground black pepper	
400 g young broad beans in their pods	

PREPARATION

1. Peel and finely chop the onions and garlic. Finely chop or grate the tomato. Finely chop the parsley. Heat a dash of oil in the lower part of the couscous pan (or another large pan). Add the onion, garlic, tomato and 3/4 of the parsley, ras el hanout, pepper and a generous amount of salt. Fry everything briefly, add approx. 1 l of warm water and bring to the boil. Leave to simmer for approx. 15 mins.
2. Wash and prepare the broad beans: remove the strings and cut into small pieces. Add the broad beans (in their pods) and frozen okra and cook for a further 20 minutes until the vegetables have softened nicely and released their flavour into the stock.
3. Place the fonio in a large dish or bowl, drizzle with 2 tbsp oil and sprinkle with a generous tsp of salt. Rub and massage the fonio so that each grain glistens slightly. Pour approx. 200 ml of lukewarm water over it and leave to stand for a few minutes until the water has been absorbed.
4. Fluff the fonio with a whisk, spoon into the upper section of the couscous pan (or a steamer lined with baking paper) and steam for approx. 10 mins over the stock. Return the fonio to the bowl, drizzle with a little cold water and fluff with a whisk. Then steam again in the same way.
5. Divide the warm fonio between deep plates, pour a little hot stock over it and scatter the vegetables on top. Sprinkle with the remaining parsley.

STICKY FONIO CAKE

Recipe by NONI KOOIMAN

INGREDIENTS for 6 CAKES

For the cakes:

140 g pitted dates
200 ml boiling water
50 g butter
2 eggs
130 g dark brown caster sugar
65 g flour
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
90 g fonio (a packet from, for example, Odin or Ekoplaza)
hand blender
small baking tins

For the sauce:

400 ml whipping cream
a handful of dried hibiscus
120 g butter
120 g dark brown caster sugar

PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 175 °C.
2. Soak the dates briefly in boiling water. Add the butter, purée with a hand blender and add the eggs.
3. In a separate bowl, mix together the sugar, flour, baking soda and fonio, then fold into the date mixture. Stir well and bake in the moulds or in a large tin for about 30 minutes at 175 °C (it takes longer in a large tin).
4. Meanwhile, bring the whipping cream for the sauce with the hibiscus to just below the boil, turn off the heat and leave to infuse for a moment. Strain the cream and bring to the boil with the butter, sugar and salt.
5. Serve the cakes warm with warm sauce and vanilla ice cream.

CLIMATE

The climate-conscious eater

A grain that grows where almost nothing else does and that helps to combat desertification rather than exacerbate it.

Fonio grows well in dry climates and can thrive on poor, sandy soils without the need for fertilisers or pesticides. It is exceptionally resistant to heat and drought. This means it can be grown in places where other cereals, such as wheat or rice, do not grow well.

The plant is also extremely fast-growing: it can be harvested within 6 to 10 weeks of sowing, about twice as fast as wheat. Growing fonio helps to combat desertification and soil erosion. The vegetation protects the soil and prevents the desert from spreading.

PERSONA STATEMENT

By choosing fonio, I am actively opting for a grain that helps combat desertification. I make choices based on climate-conscious principles. I believe it is important to have a positive impact through the food choices I make.

Key message

With fonio, you're choosing a climate-resilient grain that restores the soil rather than depleting it. Every kilo of fonio literally means more greenery on dry land.

CULTURE

The Story finder

A crop with a 5,000-year history, once a food of kings, then relegated to the status of 'hunger rice', now enjoying a resurgence in popularity.

Whilst teff is the national symbol of Ethiopia, fonio is regarded as a crop of cultural pride in various Sahelian countries. Archaeological studies show that it has been cultivated for over 5,000 years and is one of the earliest domesticated plants in the region.

In various West African societies, fonio held a special and sometimes sacred status. Historically, it was served to chiefs, kings and important guests as a sign of great respect and hospitality. In the cosmology of the Dogon people of Mali, fonio is referred to as 'Po', the 'seed of the universe'.

Colonisation led to fonio falling partly into obscurity, relegated to the status of "hunger rice". Today, it is being re-evaluated as a climate-resilient, nutritious crop and as an economic opportunity for small-scale producers and women's cooperatives in West Africa.

PERSONA STATEMENT

With fonio, I've chosen to put a grain with a rich history in the spotlight. For me, food is one of the most powerful ways to honour culture and traditions.

Key message

Fonio is food with a story behind it; it has traditional roots that are still upheld through its cultivation in the Sahel region, and it supports women's entrepreneurship.

HEALTH & NUTRITION

The health conscious eater

A nutritious wholegrain grain that is relatively high in methionine and cysteine (amino acids) compared to many other cereals, rich in minerals, and has a relatively low glycaemic index.

Fonio is a wholegrain grain with a nutritional profile similar to that of brown rice, but with some unique benefits. It contains a large proportion of the complete amino acid profile, with notably high levels of methionine and cysteine (two amino acids that are scarce in most cereals).

Its glycaemic index is relatively low: slow-release carbohydrates provide steady energy throughout the day, making fonio an attractive option for people with diabetes or those consciously seeking to stabilise their blood sugar levels. It is easily digestible and contains dietary fibre that may contribute to a healthy gut microbiome.

PERSONA STATEMENT

By choosing fonio, I am making a conscious decision to eat food that nourishes my body and keeps it in balance. The slow-release carbohydrates provide me with steady energy, whilst the high levels of amino acids and fibre support digestion and contribute to a balanced diet.

Key message

Fonio isn't just another superfood hype. It's a nutritious, complete grain that fits perfectly into a balanced diet, combining protein, minerals and sustained energy.

GLUTENFREE

The gluten-free eater

A wholesome grain that is naturally gluten-free, versatile and ready to serve in just a few minutes.

Fonio is naturally gluten-free. This means it is suitable for people with coeliac disease and for anyone who is mindful of their gluten intake. Whereas rice flour and cornflour are often used as substitutes, fonio stands on its own: as a grain with its own distinct flavour and texture.

The gluten-free market is one of the fastest-growing food categories in Europe, driven by increasing consumer demand for gluten-free and health-oriented products. Bakers are also discovering its functional benefits: fonio flour has gelling and pasting properties that show promising functional properties for gluten-free baking applications.

PERSONA STATEMENT

With fonio, I'm choosing an ancient grain that's naturally gluten-free and fits perfectly into my diet. I enjoy discovering new gluten-free products and think it's important to keep eating a varied and tasty diet without compromising on my dietary requirements.

Key message

The easiest gluten-free grain you haven't tried yet: nutritious, tasty, versatile and ready in just a few minutes.



Fonio Collective



foniocollective

**FONIO SF
COLLECTIVE YN**

CBI



Government of the Netherlands